

Message Text

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14

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 OMB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-05 SAB-01 /088 W

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R 181208Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4899

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4048

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, IS

SUBJECT: CLARIFICATION OF OFFICIAL SYRIAN STATEMENT RE GOLAN
MOBILIZATION

REF: DAMASCUS 4021

1. SYRIAN VOA AND UPI STRINGER SALWI OSTWANI TOLD EMBOFF
OCTOBER 17 THAT LOUIS FARES, LOCAL AP STRINGER WHO DRAFTED AP
ARTICLE QUOTING SYRIAN MILITARY SPOKESMAN STATEMENT THAT
ISRAEL MASSING TROOPS ALONG GOLAN FRONT IN PREPARATION FOR
LARGE-SCALE AGGRESSION, HAD MISQUOTED SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT.
SHE DREW OUR ATTENTION TO OCTOBER 15 AL-THAWRAH ARTICLE WHICH
REPORTED DEATH OF TWO SYRIANS. ARTICLE LED OFF WITH SHORT
OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON DEATHS BY SPOKESMAN REPORTED DAMASCUS
3989, AND THEN CONTINUED INTO PRESS COMMENTARY ABOUT ALLEGED
ISRAELI MILITARY PREPARATIONS. INSTEAD OF SEPARATING STATE-
MENT FROM COM-

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MENTARY, FARES ASCRIBED ENTIRE ARTICLE TO MILI-

TARY SPOKESMAN, WITH RESULT THAT HIS AP ARTICLE BEGAN WITH REPORT OF TROOP CONCENTRATIONS ON GOLAN ATTRIBUTED TO OFFICIAL SARG SPOKESMAN AND DROPPED REPORT OF TWO DEATHS TO SIXTH PARAGRAPH. FARES, ACCORDING TO SOURCE, HAD BEEN SEVERELY REPRIMANDED BY INFO MINISTRY FOR WHAT SHE TERMED INTENTIONAL DISTORTION OF NEWS.

2. EMBOFF MET WITH FARES LATER IN DAY TO ASCERTAIN HIS SIDE OF STORY AND RECEIVED SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT VERSION OF EVENTS. ACCORDING TO FARES, HE TALKED WITH "VERY HIGH MILITARY SOURCE, A GENERAL" WHO PASSED HIM INFORMATION CONTAINED IN AL-THAWRAH COMMENTARY AND AUTHORIZED FARES TO ATTRIBUTE THIS TO "MILITARY SPOKESMAN." IMPLICATION WAS THAT FARES HAD BEEN GRANTED IN EFFECT EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW. WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT HIS ARTICLE HAD STIRRED UP MAJOR BROUHAHA, FARES STATED THAT HE FULLY EXPECTED TO BE DRESSED DOWN BUT SIGNIFICANTLY NOTHING HAPPENED TO HIM. HE EXPLICITLY DENIED RECEIVING REPRIMAND FROM MININFO. FARES SAID HE HAD PHONED GENERAL AGAIN FOLLOWING DAY AND HAD BEEN TOLD THAT AL-THAWRAH COMMENTARY COULD NOT HAVE APPEARED WITHOUT FULL MILITARY APPROVAL. FARES BELIEVES THAT THIS WAS DELIBERATE ATTEMPT BY SYRIAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES TO RAISE TENSIONS.

3. COMMENT: WE INCLINED AT THIS POINT TO CREDIT FARES' VERSION OF EVENTS.
MURPHY

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